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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a review of computer software programs available for German instruction and of informal interviews with German faculty in high schools, colleges and universities with regard to their computer needs. Most computer software currently available commercially is of the drill and practice type, with a focus on grammar and vocabulary learning, not on reading comprehension, dictation, translation, and other skills. Some excellent in-house courseware has been developed by university foreign language departments which could be available through networking with colleagues in those departments. (Addresses and contact persons are provided in the text of the document.) It is probable that the following technological developments will be available in the near future: (1) inclusion of more imaginative software packages with new foreign language textbook editions and releases; (2) quality voice synthesis in the foreign language directly from the computer; (3) error specific programs that tell the students about their errors; (4) pronunciation assessment software; and (5) programs whereby students can carry on a conversation with the computer. Until software that speaks German is available, teachers are advised to familiarize themselves with computers and their potential, establish networks and newsletters, and sponsor workshops and demonstrations to familiarize themselves with the computer technology and software currently available. A guide to foreign language software vendors and a selected list of software in foreign language are appended. (MSE)

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DO COMPUTERS SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE? 'Auf Deutsch, bitte!'

1. Introduction:

Word-processors, some faculty say, have begun another revolution, that is bound to affect our lives in- and outside the classroom. While some of us are still able to ignore its presence, in the future, we may no longer be in the position to do without them.

This paper is intended to inform the German language teacher about the (1) use of computers/word-processors in foreign language instruction; (2) state of computer software in German; and (3) future in computers and German.

2. Word-Processors and the Foreign Language Teacher

In recent years, an increasing number of foreign language departments in our high schools, colleges and universities have purchased one or more word-processors for use by the department faculty, students, administration. Our secretaries and students were the first who learned how to use them.

(This research was presented in a different form and with major changes at the 1986 Kentucky Foreign Language Conference, University of Kentucky, Lexington, April 24 to 26, 1986.)

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At last, some of us have ventured into experimenting with word-processors to assist in our scholarly endeavors. But there is a wide range of other uses in our profession. Most often cited are its possiblities with regard to (1) Practice and Diagnosis in the particular language; (2) Tutorial applications for students who need additional help; (3) Problem-Solving Simulation, and (4) Utility.

Most foreign language departments that have purchased one or more word-processors are using them most likely for their research and publishing needs rather than for teaching. Indeed, word-processing -- inspite of the horrible name -- may have led the way to the general acceptance of computers into our 'sanctum', replacing the manual and electric typewriters. If so, you have learned to appreciate its assistance in preparing and storing texts, be it an examination, a research paper, a curriculum vitae, a class syllabus, or the like.

The pupular myth that one needs a certain degree of computer literacy to use a word-processor has also faded into oblivion. The truth of the matter is, that anyone who is able to use a typewriter, can handle a desk-top computer. Typing, which is now called word-processing, is made much easier because it allows you to correct your typographical errors before they are printed out, to make additions and deletions, to format a paper, to make different versions of an examination without having to type it all over again, among many other uses.

2.1 Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI) and the German Teacher

In preparation for the present study, I researched the available computer software programs in German, that are distributed by such companies as Teacher's Discovery, Gessler's Publishing Comapny, Inc., the various textbook publishing houses, and the German language software available through independent software companies. (Appendix I) Furthermore, I talked to German faculty in the high schools, colleges and universities with regard to their computer needs, and evaluated the major computer company catalogues to see what is new on this market, visa vis, software.

The results of this 'Survey' were surprising, to say the least: Out of the 65 faculty surveyed, only about 22 (appr. 1/3) used a word-processor at least once per week; however, only four persons knew how to program the word-processor. Eight German teachers had used or are still using some type of computer -assisted instruction in their German language classes, some more, others less. And last but not least, none of the German teachers surveyed, was satisfied with the overall value of the computer software.

Judging from discussions with faculty from other disciplines, it became clear, that foreign language teachers, in general, and German teachers, in particular, used CAI less frequently in their classes. Furthermore, schools that incorporated some kind of computer-assisted instruction, did so more often on the elementary rather than advanced

levels for vocabulary reviews and and grammar drills.

Software producers and language textbook publishers tell us that this is likely to change with the next generation of their foreign language textbooks and as teachers become more accustomed with word-processors and as more sophisticated software programs become available.

Looking through the jungle of available softwares in the FLs, I must admit that there is an impressive amount of computer software materials available and for a wide range of languages. (See APPENDIX #2 for a selected List of Language Software Vendors and Materials) Likewise, their prices vary tremendously.

When comparing these programs, for example, to software that is being used in some of the schools, one realizes that much of it is self-made, in-house. Unfortunately, much of this software is not readily available to everyone. What is available is marketed by computer companies or by some small software firms which were founded by 'enterpreneurially-minded' computer-knowledgeable language specialists.

In a few instances, a department can even join a Consortium of institutions of higher learning sharing programs such as PLATO. More often than not, however, the computer program found in German departments are of the "in-house" type, created by a local faculty member and tailored to local needs - such as a specific book, specific type of teaching method, specific language skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, etc.

Looking at the commercially available CAI-German programs, it becomes obvious that they fall into the category of "Drill and

Practice", most, if not all of them, concentrating on vocabulary drills and grammmar exercises. My "Hand-Out #1" (Appendix #1), entitled A GUIDE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE SOFTWARE VENDORS, though listing only the major software vendors, will give you a good idea with regard to the type of programs, language of the software program, and costs.

'Teacher's Discovery' advertises a 'Basic Vocabulary Builder', 'Vocabulary on the Attack', a word-game whereby words zip across the screen and your survival depends upon how fast you can recognize the word or words and select the correct translation, 'Poker Parat' presents multiple-choice questions about stories, history, myths of Germany, and 'Hangman' stressing the correct spelling of words.

'Gessler Publishing Co., Inc.' offers a similar choice of software: 'Der, die, das', reviewing definite article declensions, 'Apfeldeutsch', (7 discs and 6 audio cassettes) reviewing German vocabulary and grammar, 'Camsoft', a program consisting of 2 discs drilling German vocabulary, verb conjugations, and sentence construction, 'Fritz Goes to School', reviewing the use of German prepositions, 'Tuco', a program which reviews basic verb conjugations, 'Apfelschuss', aimed at increasing a student's basic vocabulary, 'Zauberschloss', a word game.

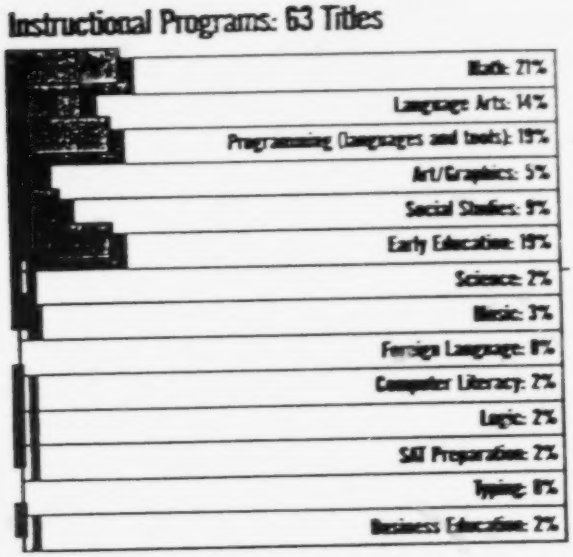
International Software, Inc. follows a similar line of software products. Textbook publishers, such as Heinle & Heinle, Random House, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., and Houghton & Mifflin, Inc. plan to have textbook-bound software programs that

promise exiting programs geared toward an integrated approach to language instruction.

Obviously, the authors of most of these software programs have had difficulty in including all the skills that a teacher would want to teach in the German language classroom. Hand-Out #3 provides you with a matrix of skills that could or should be included in your ideal software program. It is intended to be used as a mark-off sheet to guide you in your decision-making process. (See APPENDIX #3)

When looking at the Hand-Out #1 it becomes obvious that the software materials available to the German teacher appear to concentrate on basic grammar and vocabulary learning, rather than skills such as reading comprehension, dictation, translation, to mention just a few. Admittedly, there are already some programs, though rudimentary, available that do teach such skills. However, I must agree with a recent New York Times quote from December 9, 1984 which states that "drill and computer literacy programs are ... criticized for failing to utilize the full power of the computer" and for "not achieving the academic revolution expected from the new technology." (New York Times, December 9, 1984)

One wonders whether or not it was because of such harsh criticisms that of the 63 reported instructional programs in 1984 none was in Foreign Languages:



(Taken from: Electronic Learning, published by Scholastic Inc., March, 1985, p. 53)

2.2 A Burned Child Shuns the Fire:

Many of the teachers that I talked to reminded me of the promises that were made by many language laboratory equipment manufacturers not too long ago, promising this to be the panacea, the dream come true, for language teachers and students alike. As a result, much maligned, because the early programs were thought to be as unimmaginative as conventional language laboratories, software drill and practice programs have been accepted as helpful tools, and when refined, even highly effective ones.

Indeed, much has been written about the obvious advantages of CAI, for example, (1) for individualized instruction, (2) with regard to the high retention rate because of constant interaction between the student and the software program, (3) and regarding the infinite patience of the machine. These sound like the same reasons that we were given when the first language laboratory was sold in our schools. The questions you have to ask yourself here

are: "Does the type and quality of the software program justify the price?" "Will my students be using the program sufficiently to make it worthwhile?" "Will the program be outdated if and when we change text books?" And, most importantly, "Do I have to tailor the program to my personal needs?" If so? "Can the program be tailored?" (Appendix #3 - What are your course objectives.)

Of course, if you search long enough, you can find software programs for tutorial and testing purposes and some more advanced materials for reading comprehension, composition, and cultural information. Unfortunately, most of these programs have been created for very specific local needs, and they are not available commercially. I would like to mention the following 'in-home' programs that I have seen and which I deem "the cream of the crop":

(1) The Department of German at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH has created its own software for the first and second year and for upper division language instruction. The authors are Drs. Haas and Taylor.

(2) The German Department at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, IO has designed software for German, French, Spanish, and Swedish in its Foreign Language Software package which is available to all its students.

(3) Videodeutsch, designed by Professors Dahl (Montana State Univesity) and Luckau (BYU) promises to combine computer software, video, and cassette recorders into one "package".

If you are interested in such "in-house" programs as I mentioned above or, better still, if you would like to learn more about

creating your own software, you might consider 'networking' with your "experienced" colleagues to (a) maybe, copy the software for your use in your department, or (b) to be assisted in creating your own software. (Hand-Out #4 will help you decide what kind of software program is most suitable for yourself, your department, and your students) (Appendix #3). Questions dealing with content, approach, design, control, delivery, and 'the Bottom Line' are most helpful in the decision making process.

2.3 Auf Deutsch, bitte!:

At the outset of this paper I posed the question: "Do Computers Speak our Language? Auf Deutsch, bitte!" Let me now attempt to give you my personal answer.

Even though most if not all of the commercially available software programs that I have been able to examine do not "speak our language", some 'in-house' programs do. However, I feel certain that the following technological developments will be at our disposal in the near future:

1. Most foreign language textbook companies and authors will include more imaginative software packages with their new editions and releases. My suggestions: Wait to see what is about to be published before you purchase new software for your computer or computer lab.

2. Quality voice synthesis in FL directly from the computer with no need for tapes will soon be available. IBM and Street Electronics are both close to marketing this soon.

3. Error-specific programs that tell the student he made a mistake and why should be commercially available within the next 2 to 3 years. A rudimentary version of this already can be found in the software materials from D. C. Heath and from Heinle & Heinle. If you are looking for quality error-specific programs, my advice is: Wait! It's coming very soon.

4. Pronunciation assessment software, whereby the computer will read a student's pronunciation, compare it to a model, and give a percentage assessment of the student's accuracy should be coming out soon, also. A rudimentary version is already on the market.

5. Conversations with the computer, whereby the students will be able to carry on a conversation with the computer in a FL are at present in the research/laboratory stages. MIT's "Athena Project" should be completed in the next 4 or 5 years. It is predicted that the computer's reactions will be unpredictable and approximate to what would happen if a person were on the other side of the keyboard.

3. Conclusion:

As far as I am concerned, the present state of the art of commericially available computer software in German is not the panacea. However, the possibility that software will 'speak our language' at some point in the not-too-distant future is exiting. The question of the "when" depends on numerous factors, chief

among them are (a) economic and (b) human considerations.

In the meantime, we might do well to get acquainted with this newcomer in our homes and offices and study its potential for improving our academic offerings in German. Furthermore, we might start a GERMAN TEACHER - GERMAN TEACHER COMPUTER LINK, i. e., a support group which gets other German teachers involved with things 'software in German'. Here are a few ways to get other German language teachers started:

1. Publish a computer Newsletter; get together with other German language teachers who can help edit, write, and/ or distribute the newsletter. The newsletter could include suggestions for specific programs, announcements and news about software in German.

2. Choose a Software-Program-of-the-Month in German that is developed by a commercial company or in-house, discuss its possibilities, objectives, how a German teacher can employ it in his/her classroom, and the like.

3. Sponsor workshops that are designed to help other German language teachers in the use of computer software.

4. Develop promotional demonstrations for other German teachers to generate interest, focusing your attention on what you are doing and how others could use this software for their classrooms.

5. Offer computer training to other German teachers to encourage more departments to include computers in the instruction of German.

Pursuing some or all of the above suggestions will make certain that you will be ready when the software finally speaks our language: 'Auf Deutsch, bitte!'

APPENDIX I

A GUIDE TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE SOFTWARE VENDORS

COMPANY	TYPE OF PROGRAM	LANGUAGE & COST
Anthro-Digital, Inc. 103 Bartlett Avenue Pittsfield, MA 01201 (413)448-8278	word processing/ spelling/translation	Hebrew/$60-$90
Avant-Garde Creations Inc. P.O. Box 30160 Eugene, OR 97403 (503)345-3043	user-created flash card/German program	German & others/ $29.95/Educational Demo Disk/$10
Compu-Tations Inc. P.O. Box 502 Troy, MI 48099 (313)689-5059	vocabulary drill & practice (user option to add data files)	French, German, Spanish/$24.95
Computer Island 227 Hampton Green Staten Island, NY 10312 (212)948-2748	vocabulary drill in game format/Hebrew alphabet/Hebrew vocabulary & sentence drill/ (user option to add data)	French, Italian, Spanish, Hebrew/ $9.95-$19.95
Conduit P.O. Box 388 Iowa City, IA 52244 (319)353-5789	verb drill/vocabulary drill/(user option to add data)	Spanish/$110 package (30-day trial option
D.C. Heath & Company Distribution Center 2700 North Richardt Ave. P.O. Box 10309 Indianapolis, IN 46219 (800)428-8071	vocabulary, grammar, culture tutorial drill (two systems available which are geared to Heath textbooks.)	French/$81/ (30-day trial option
Educational Audio Visual Pleasantville, NY 10570 (800)431-2196	verb drill/vocabulary drill/grammar drill/ word search puzzles/ (user option to add data)	Spanish, French, German/$24-$133 package
George Earl 1302 South General McMullen San Antonio, TX 78237 (512)434-3681	vocabulary & sentence drill in hangman game/ Spanish reader	French, German, Latin, Russian, Spanish/$29.95/ (30-day trial option

APPENDIX 1

SOFTWARE VENDORS (continued)

COMPANY	TYPE OF PROGRAM	LANGUAGE & COST
Instant Software Peterborough, NH 03458 (603)924-9471	alphabet, word, & phrase drill	Russian/$14.95-$29.95
International Languages Resources 22 Vernon Valley Road East Northport, NY 11731-1492	sentence drill/ number drill/ shopping game	French/$39.50-$59.50
Island Software Box 300 Dept.E Lake Grove, NY 11755 (516)585-3755	vocabulary drill/ verb drill/ user created drills	French & Spanish/ $80 package
Jagdstaffel Software 645 Brenda Lee Drive San Jose, CA 95123 (408)578-1643	vocabulary word-phrase drill (user option to create data or purchase data disks)	French, German, Spanish, Russian/ program disk $29.95-$39.95/data disk $12.95-$18
J&S Software 140 Reid Avenue Port Washington, NY 11050 (516)944-9304	vocabulary drill in game format (user option to change data)	French/$34.50/ General Demo/$5
Krell Software Corp. 1320 Stony Brook Road Stony Brook, NY 11790 (516)751-5139	grammar drill & practice	German/$179.95
Micro Learningware Highway 66 South, Box 307 Mankato, MN 56002 (507)625-2205	vocabulary, grammar, verb drill	French, German/ $24.95/(30-day trial option)
Myriad Systems P.O. Box 51-323 Palo Alto, CA 94303 (415)851-2200	number & vocabulary drill	Spanish/$45/ (2-week trial option)
National Textbook Company 4255 West Touhy Avenue Lincolnwood, IL 60646-1975 (800)323-4900	vocabulary drill	French, German, Italian, Spanish/ $49.95
Powersoft, Inc. P.O. Box 157 Pitman, NJ 08071 (609)589-5500	vocabulary drill (user option to add lessons)	French, Spanish, Italian, German/ $24.95

APPENDIX 1

SOFTWARE VENDORS (CONTINUED)

COMPANY	TYPE OF PROGRAM	LANGUAGE & COST
The Professor/Computerra P.O. Box 301 Swanton, Vermont 05488 (514)747-9130	user-created question program/word processing/reading/ spelling/vocabulary drill/games/math	French & others/ $24.95-$399.95/ The Great Creator Demo/$5
Program Design, Inc. 95 East Putnam Avenue Greenwich, CT 06830	word search vocabulary drill	French, Spanish/ $23.95
Realia/Gessler Publishing Company, Inc. 900 Broadway New York, NY 10003 (212)673-3113	vocabulary drill/ verb drill/grammar drill/games/(some with user option to add data)	French, German, Spanish/$24.95-$79.95/trial option possible with prior written authorizat'
Schoolhouse Software 290 Brighton Road Elk Grove, IL 60007 (312)526-5027	tutorial & game format drill/user-created drill in game format	French, German, Spanish/$55-$95/ free demos
SEI (Sliwa Enterprises Inc.) P.O. Box 7266 2013 Cunningham Dr.-Suite 238 Hampton, VA 23666 (804)826-3777	vocabulary word-phrase drill (user option to add data)	French, German, Spanish/$30/ Demo disk/$10/ (30-day return option)
Teach Yourself by Computer Software 2128 W. Jefferson Road Pittsford, NY 14534 (716)424-5453	authoring systems/ data disks available	French, German, Spanish/$24.95-$149.95/ Data files $5.95 (30-day trial option)
Wida Software 2 Nicholas Gardens, London, W5 5HY, England 01-567 6941	vocabulary-phrase drill authoring system/ verb drill/grammar drill	French, German/ $32-$230 (14-day on approval trial option)
Heinle and Heinle 286 Congress Street Boston, Mass.02210 (617) 451-1940	comprehensive grammar and vocabulary drills (geared to a textbook)	French, Spanish
EMC Corporation 300 York Avenue St. Paul, Mn. 55101	comprehensive grammar and vocabulary drills (geared to a textbook)	French
Lingo Fun, Inc. Box 486 Westerville, OH 43081	grammar, vocabulary, verb drills and games	French, Spanish

APPENDIX 2

SELECTED LIST OF SOFTWARE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

TITLE	PUBLISHER
German V ocabulary Builder	Plato Control Data
German Vocabulary for Shopping Use	Plato Control Data
French Travel Vocabulary	Plato Contro Data
French Vocabulary Builder	Plato Control Data
German Vocabulary Drill	Powersoft
German Vocabulary Builder	SEI
German Vocabulary Drill	Compu-tations
The Definite Article	Avante-garde
German and Russian Practice	George Earl
English German Foods	N/a
French I	Acorn
Demo Disk	J-Ware
Dasher	Conduit
One Armed Bandit	CEEDE
People and Activities	CEEDE
Word Search Spanish	Program Design
English: Basic Mechanics	Educulture
French Keyboard Disk	Wida Software
German Keyboard Disk	Wida Software
Telling Time Russian and German	CEEDE
French-503 Clock French-502 Numbers	BIPACS
Spanish-502 Clock Spanish-503 Numbers	BIPACS
Spanish Vocabulary Builder	PLATO Control Data

APPENDIX 2

TITLE	PUBLISHER
Japanese Katakana	Super Prompter
Italian Vocabulary-Drill	Powersoft
Italian Vocabulary-Drill	Powersoft
German I	International
Multi-Lingual Word Processor	The Professor
The Russian Disk	Instant Software
Know Your Apple	MUSE
Mystery House	On-Line
Foreign/English	SEI
Vocabulary on the Attack	J-Ware
Hebrew Bulletin Board	Computer Island
Italian Baseball	Computer Island
Hebrew Alphabet	Computer Island
French Verbs	Micro Learning
Language in Contrast	CEEDE
Dasher English Authoring	Conduit
Dasher Spanish Authoring	Conduit
Verb Conjugation Russian	N/A
Nominative & Accusative Cases	N/A
Passe Compose French	N/A
Four Letter Words English	Conduit
Spanish Grammar #2	Conduit
Textalker Speech Generator	ECHO
Echo Demo Disk	ECHO

APPENDIX 2

TITLE:	Publisher:
F.L. List Game: The List Builder	Wise Owl Workshop
DASHER: Spanish, French, German	Conduit
The Puzzler	Tara
Apfeldeutsch	WIDA
George Earl's Alicia	George Earl
The Pits	J-Ware
Chinese Lessons	BYU Humanities Res.
German Vocabulary Drill	Compu-tations
Homonyms	Hartley
Verb Usage	Hartley
El Vocabulario Espanol	Island Software
The Spanish Hangman	George Earl
Spanish Clock Program - Numbers	Bipacs
Verb Conjugation in Spanish	?
Spanish Vocabulary Drill	Powersoft
Spanish/English Educational Software	SEI
Spanish Achievement I	Microcomputer Workshops
Terroriste	The Professor
Les Campagnes Napoleoniennes	Computerre
Le Prisonnier	The Professor
French Clock Program - Numbers	Bipacs
French Vocabulary Drill	Powersoft
French/English Educational Software	SEI
Le Vocabulaire Frencais	Island Software
The French Hangman	George Earl
Practical Life Skills: Vietnamese	CEEDE
Filling It Out: Unit IV	CEEDE
Vecinos Y Amigos I and II (CAT)	CEEDE
Neighbors and Friends	CEEDE
Lao Festivals	CEEDE

APPENDIX 3

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND CAI SKILLS IN FLs

CAI Types: / FL-OBJECTIVES	Practice and Diagnosis	Tutorial	Simulation Problem-solving	Utility
VOCABULARY				
GRAMMAR				
PRONUNCIATION				
CONVERSATION				
LISTENING				
READING				
COMPOSITION				
CULTURE				